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DIFFERENTIAL CASE MARKING IN BODO¹

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Abstract

Bodo exhibits differential case marking for its subject and object arguments. In Bodo, subject marking is obligatory with inanimate subjects of stative verbs and animate subjects of dynamic verbs. Object marking, on the other hand, is obligatory with human and proper nouns. As for pronouns, the split is along the lines of person. The 3rd person subject gets obligatory marking, whereas in all other cases, subject and object marking on pronouns remains optional. Like in many other Tibeto-Burman languages, which exhibit optional case marking, the choices for subject and object marking depend on various semantic or pragmatic factors. One crucial factor in which the subject is case marked in Bodo include whether the subject involvement is conceived as an event or state, and the speaker's knowledge of the subject involved in an event or state. Other crucial factors for object marking include the specificity of the object, the degree of affectedness of the object, and contrastive focus.

Keywords: Differential case marking; Bodo; Bodo-Garo; Tibeto-Burman

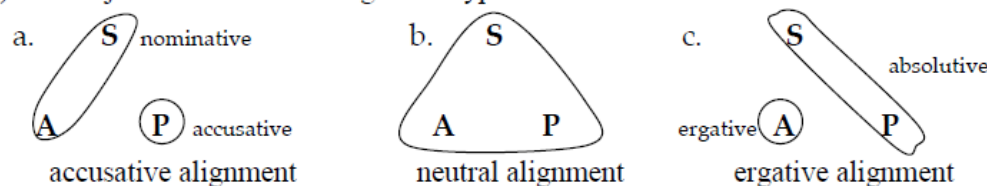
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1 Introduction

This paper discusses the differential case marking in Bodo, a Tibeto-Burman language of the Bodo-Garo subgroup. As in many other Tibeto-Burman languages, the marking of the subject and object in Bodo cannot be merely captured using the major alignment types in Fig 1 below. By using the well-known role proto-type S (single argument of intransitive verb), A (agent-like argument of transitive verb) and P (patient-like argument of transitive verb), we can say that if S and A are treated alike as opposed to P, we get accusative alignment (as in 1a); if all three are treated alike, we get a neutral alignment (as in 1b); and if S and P are treated alike as opposed to A, we get ergative alignment (as in 1c).

Figure 1: Major case alignment types from Haspelmath (2005).

(1) The major monotransitive alignment types



¹ The paper is the result of elicitation sessions with native Bodo linguists Ramtanu Brahma and the second author. The data was cross checked with Araiswrang Basumatary and Parijat Narzary for accuracy. My sincere thanks go to the reviewers for their valuable comments. Only I am responsible for any shortcomings of the paper.

Classifying languages on the basis of the alignment types in Figure 1 work for languages in which case marking is purely determined by the transitive nature of the verb. Tibeto-Burman languages, in which case marking is determined by the transitivity status of a clause include Mizo, Hmar, Thadou, Chepang, Newar, Kham, Sunwar, Tibetan dialects (LaPolla² 2004:50), and Chang (Alec Coupe 2011). Recent studies have shown that many Tibeto-Burman languages exhibit split alignment system which is known in the literature on case marking as Differential Case Marking (DCM in short). Languages which exhibit DCM mark their subjects and objects under different semantic or pragmatic considerations. McGregor (2009: 480-508) shows that ergative systems, in general, are rarely systematic, and that ergativity is rarely (if ever) found consistently throughout all aspects of a language's syntax. LaPolla (1992:1) argues that TB languages lack a definable 'subject' or 'direct object'; rather, semantic and pragmatic principles govern their discourse structure. Delancey (2011:9-20) shows that with respect to Tibetan and other languages of the TB family, the presence of the 'pragmatic ergative' is characteristic of the family (with a few languages which show more familiar typological profiles). Many Tibeto-Burman languages use case markers for a variety of functions. Some Tibeto-Burman languages which use case markers for a variety of functions are as follows.

Chelliah (2009: 286) shows that the agentive marker in Manipuri is used in those instances in which the speaker wishes to indicate noteworthy agent involvement or unexpected instances of an activity. Chelliah also shows that subjects of states cannot be marked by *-na* but rather receive a reading of contrastive focus if marked by *-na*. On the other hand, patients are marked by *-na* only when they are definite and specific.

Hyslop (2010: 1-40) shows that Kurtop, an East Bodish language of Bhutan, uses case marker for a variety of functions. The ergative marker signals the A argument in some bivalent clauses and denotes a variety of pragmatic and semantic functions in both monovalent and bivalent clauses. In bivalent clauses, a set of verbs also exhibits differential object marking, employing a locational case marker to designate various types of pragmatic focus.

Alec Coupe (2011:36-37) shows that in Mongsen Ao (spoken in Nagaland), agency, personal choice and intention are key pragmatic influences on the use of the agentive case marking in all types of verbal clause, except general statements of habitual activity.

Morey (2012: 1-14) shows that in the Numphuk variety of Singpho, the phrase particle *-i* functions both as a marker of agentive and also as adverbial particles marking locationals, temporal and causals. Morey further shows that the use of *-i* is found to only weakly correlate with either the transitivity of the verb or the definiteness of the agent referent, being slightly more likely to be employed with verbs of stronger transitivity and agents of less definiteness. He also shows that *-i* occurs frequently during speech acts.

Like many Tibeto-Burman languages, Bodo has a system of DCM for its subjects and objects, whose usage may be optional or obligatory depending on the animacy of the subject or whether the object is a proper or common noun. That is, case markers are obligatory with inanimate subjects of a stative verb and animate subjects of a dynamic verb and optional with animate subjects of a stative verb and inanimate subjects of a dynamic verb. Similarly, a case marker is obligatory when the object is a personal noun and optional with a common noun. Again, like in many languages which exhibit DSM, Bodo marks its subjects and objects under different semantic or pragmatic functions as discussed in sections 1.4 and 1.5 regarding differential subject and object marking respectively.

1.1. Language background

Bodo, or Boro as it is also known, is a Tibeto-Burman language of the Boro-Garo subgroup. It is the second Tibeto-Burman language after Manipuri to be recognized under the eighth schedule of the Indian

² In his survey of 170 TB languages, LaPolla (2004:50) demonstrated that TB languages differ greatly in term of ergative marking. At one extreme, TB languages such as 'Dulung, Namuyi, Hani, Naxi, Achang, Nusu, and dialects of the Deng languages in China' optionally use the ergative markers, and when it is used, it functions solely to clarify which of the two potential agents (human animate referents) is the actual agent. At the other extreme, there are languages such as 'Chepang, Newar, Kham, Sunwar, and most Tibetan dialects' having a relatively stable paradigmatic ergative system.

constitution.³ It is by far the largest language of the Boro-Garo subgroup, spoken by about 200,000 (Joseph and Burling:2006) people spread across western Assam, Cachar Hills and in some parts of Nepal bordering West Bengal. In Assam, Bodo speakers are mainly found along the Brahmaputra river basin. In Meghalaya, they are found in Garo Hill. According to the 2001 census of India, the total population of Bodo speakers is 1,330,775. P. C. Bhattacharya (1977) lists four dialect areas: (i) North-west dialect area having sub-dialects of North-Kamrup and North-Goalpara, (ii) South-west dialect area comprising South-Goalpara and Garo Hills Districts, (iii) North-central Assam areas comprising Darrang, Lakimpur district and a few places of Arunachal Pradesh, and (vi) the southern Assam dialect area comprising Nowgaon, North Cachar, Mikir Hills and Adjacent districts. Phukan Basumatary (2005) lists three dialects: (i) the Western Bodo dialect, (ii) the Eastern Bodo dialect and (iii) the Southern Bodo dialect. In the past, Bodo speakers of Kokrajhar district have problem in understanding *Burdun* and *Sanzari* dialects but in the recent time, this problem have been overcome on account of more frequent interaction between speakers of these dialects. *Sanzari* and *Burdun* are mutually intelligible and the Bodos considered them as part of the same dialect. *Burdun* is spoken in Bengtol, Tukhrarhar, and Amthekha areas in Chirang district, the northwestern part of Kokrajhar district of Assam and the indigenous people who are residing in the state of West Bengal. *Sanzari* on the other hand, is spoken mainly in Udalguri district, and some eastern part of Baksa district, and some western part of Sonitpur district in Assam.

1.2 Literature review

Previous researchers present a sketchy account of the number of case markers in Bodo. While most researchers have presented a list of case markers with examples, no one has described the conditions under which such case markers are used in the language. For example, Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* (1903:16) mentioned seven cases. Grierson used case labels such as nominative and accusative for subject and object marking, but failed to account for instances in which the case markers are optional. Grierson claimed that the nominative case is unmarked while the accusative case is marked by *khaū*. The instrumental case is marked by *zang*, dative *nū*, ablative by *ni-frai*, possessive by *ni* or *ha*, and the locative by *ao*. Rev. Endle (1911) mentioned eight case markers in Bodo. Like Grierson, Rev. Endle was also of the opinion that the nominative case is unmarked (which he represented by \emptyset), the object case is marked by *khó*, the instrumental case is marked by *zang*, the dative by *nō*, ablative by *ni-frai*, possessive by *ni* or *há*, the locative by *ao* and the vocative by *heloi*. In more recent publications, native speakers such Madhu Ram Baro (1996) and Aleendra Brahma (2013) also listed the case markers of Bodo without specifying the conditions under which the case markers occur. For instance, Swarna Prabha Chainary mentions nominative (*a/w/∅*) as the nominative marker and (*khuu/ ∅*) as the accusative case marker. The inclusion of \emptyset as one of the case markers is indicative of the fact that native speakers have a choice to use or not to use these markers in their discourse. But none of them considers the discourse structure under which these case markers occur in the language. This paper tries to fill in the gaps by discussing all the possible factors which are responsible for the occurrence and non-occurrence of case markers in Bodo.

1.2 Bodo case markers

As observed by previous scholars, Bodo has eight case markers which may occur as a postposition of an NP. Out of these, six occur as peripheral case markers and two as core participant markers. These case markers are *-zwng* 'instrumental and associative', *-ni* 'genitive', *-ao* 'locative', *-niphrai* 'ablative', *-nw* 'dative', *-a* 'subject', and *-khwu* 'object'. The instrumental and associative markers are exemplified in (1a-b); the genitive and locative in (1c); the ablative in (1d), and the dative in (e). Note that the ablative is formed by prefixing the *ni*- 'genitive' with *phrai* in which the second morpheme of the ablative is a postposition that governs the genitive. The instrumental and associative markers are homophonous; however, since their distribution is quite different, they are listed as two separate markers. The function of *-a*⁴ 'subject' and *-khwu*

³ The Indian constitution recognized 27 Indian languages under eight schedule languages including two Tibeto-Burman languages, Manipuri and Bodo.

⁴ The subject marker has five allomorphs; *-a*, *-w-*, *ya*, *-wa* and *-yw-*; *-a* occurs if the preceding noun ends with a consonant, *-w* occurs if the preceding consonant pronoun end with a consonant, *-ya* occurs when the preceding noun or pronoun ends with /i/, /e/, /a/ or diphthong /ai/, *-wa* occurs when the preceding noun or pronoun ends with /o/, /u/ or diphthong /uu/, and *-yu* occurs when the preceding noun or pronoun ends with /i/.

‘object’ are discussed in sections 1.4 and 1.5 respectively. Throughout this paper, I will use SBJ as a subject marker and OBJ as object marker.

- (1) a. *bui-ya* *daba-zwng* *goi* *kháo-yu*
my-grandmother-SBJ knife-INST betel nut cut-AFF
‘My grandmother cuts (a) betel nut with a knife’.
- b. *ang-w* *nwnng-zwng* *thang-gwn*
1SG-SBJ you-COM go-FUT
‘I will go with you’.
- c. *mothor-a* *ang-ni-yao* *swudao-dwng*
car-SBJ 1SG-GEN-LOC hit-RLS
‘The car hit me’. (lit: The car hit my body)
- biphang-niphrai* *phithai* *swmzi-w*
fruit-ABL fruit sprout-SP
‘Fruit sprouts from the tree’.
- e. *ang-w* *Nuri-nw* *rang-khwu* *hw-bai-mwn*
1SG-SBJ Nuri-DAT money-OBJ give-PRF-PST
‘I gave money to Nuri’.

Table 1 below demonstrates the optional and obligatory occurrence of the subject and object markers with both animate and inanimate subjects and objects in Bodo. As shown below, the subject marker is obligatory only with an inanimate subject of a stative verb and an animate subject of a dynamic verb, and with a 3rd person pronominal subject. The object, on the other hand, is obligatory only with human and proper nouns.

Table 1: Optional and obligatory case markers of Bodo

SUBJECT ⇔ ↓	+Animate	-Animate
Stative verb	optional	obligatory
Dynamic verb	obligatory	optional
Pronouns		
1 st person	optional	
2 nd person	optional	
3 rd person	obligatory	
object		
Human and proper nouns	obligatory	
Common nouns	optional	optional

1.3 Differential subject marking

Subject marking may be obligatory or optional in Bodo. That is, the case marker *-a* is obligatory with inanimate subjects of stative verbs and animate subjects of non-stative verbs. Example (2) shows *-a* as a default subject marker with an inanimate subject of a stative verb.

- (2) a. *zi-ya ran-bai* **zi ran-bai*
 cloth-SBJ dry-PRF cloth dry-PRF
 'The cloth dried'. 'The cloth dried'.
- b. *laothi-ya gwla* **laothi gwla*
 stick-SBJ long stick long
 'Stick is long'. 'Stick is long'.
- zwwu-wa mwzang* **zwwu mwzang*
 wine-SBJ good wine good
 'Wine is good'. 'Wine is good'.

With subjects of non-stative (dynamic) verb, case marking is obligatory with animate subjects and optional with inanimate subjects. Examples (3a-d) show *-a* as the default subject marker with animate subjects of a non-stative verb.

- (3) a. *musuu-wa guglui-bai*
 cow-SBJ fall down- PRF
 'The cow fell down'.
- b. *Ram-a guglui-bai*
 Ram-SBJ fall down- PRF
 'Ram fell down'.
- c. *musuu-wa bi-ni athing-khuu siphai-bai*
 cow-SBJ 3-GEN leg-OBJ break-PRF
 'The cow has broken his leg'.

As stated above, case marking is optional with inanimate subjects of non-stative verbs. Examples (4-7) below show *-a* as the default marker for all types of declarative statements that a speaker wishes to make. In contrast, the subject without a case marker is used when a speaker desires the attention of someone about the event undergone by the subject. In (4a), the speaker makes a simple statement about the cloth falling, but in (4b), the speaker is trying to get the attention of someone's help to pick up the falling cloth.

- (4) *zi-ya gwglwi-bai*
 cloth-SBJ fell down-PRF
- a. Agent *zi-ya* 'cloth- SBJ': 'The cloth fell down'.
 b. Agent *zi* 'cloth': 'The cloth fell down'. (Someone must pick it up)
- (5) *laothi-ya bai-bai*
 stick-SBJ break-PRF
- a. Agent *laothi-ya* 'stick-SBJ': 'The stick broke'.
 b. Agent *laothi* 'stick': 'The stick broke'. (one must see it)
- (6) *onthai=ya gwglwi=dwng-mwn*
 stone= SBJ fall down-RLS-PST
- a. Agent *onthai-ya* 'stone-SBJ': 'The stone fell down'.
 b. Agent *onthai* 'stone': 'The stone fell down'. (one must see it)

- (7) *kap-a* *bai=yw*
 cup-SBJ break-DECL
- a. Agent *kap-ya* ‘stone-SBJ’: ‘The cup broke’.
 b. Agent *kap* ‘stone’: ‘The cup broke’. (one must do something)

Inanimate subjects (e.g. wind, water, sun, etc.) of non-stative verbs or animate subjects are case marked by *-a* when they are definite, while those subjects lack case marking when are indefinite. Examples (8) to (11) show inanimate subjects, while (12) to (13) show animate subjects.

- (8) *bar-a* *bar-dwng*
 wind-SBJ blow=RLS
- a. Agent *bar-a* ‘wind-SBJ’: ‘The wind blows’.
 b. Agent *bar* ‘wind’: ‘A wind blows’.
- (9) *dwi-ya* *bwhwi-dwng*
 water-SBJ flow=RLS
- a. Agent *dwi-ya* ‘water- SBJ’: ‘The water flows’.
 b. Agent *dwi* ‘water’: ‘A water flows’.
- (10) *dinwi* *sanding-a* *wngkhar-dwng*
 Today sunshine-SBJ come out=RLS
- a. Agent *sanding -ya* ‘sunshine-SBJ’: ‘The sun shines’.
 b. Agent *sanding* ‘sunshine’: ‘Sun shines (as a routine)’.
- (11) *phithai-ya* *mwn-w*
 fruit-SBJ ripe-HAB
- a. Agent *phithai -ya* ‘fruit-SBJ’: ‘The fruit ripens’.
 b. Agent *phithai* ‘fruit’: ‘Fruit ripens (by the virtues of its property)’.
- (12) *sikhla-ya* *mwsa-dwng*
 girl-SBJ dance=RLS
- Agent *sikhla-ya* ‘girl-SBJ’: ‘The girl is dancing’.
 Agent *sikhla* ‘girl’: ‘A girl is dancing’.
- (13) *cswu-wa* *gangsw-khwu* *za-yw*
 cow-SBJ grass-OBJ eat=AFF
- a. Agent *mwsu-wa* ‘cow-SBJ’: ‘The cow eat grass’.
 b. Agent *mwsu* ‘cow’: ‘A cow eats grass’.

Animate subjects of stative and dynamic verbs, on the other hand, are marked by *-a* only when a speaker has specific knowledge about the subject involved in the state of an affair as in (14) to (15) or an event as in

(16) to (17) below. Unlike some Tibeto-Burman languages such as Manipuri⁵, volitionality is not a factor in whether a subject is to be case marked.

- | | | | | |
|------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| (14) | <i>Dabla-ya</i>
Dabla-SBJ | <i>dukhu</i>
sad | <i>za-dwng</i>
happen-RLS | |
| | a. Agent | <i>Dabla-ya</i> | 'Dabla-SBJ': | 'Dabla is sad'. (because his uncle passed away) |
| | b. Agent | <i>Dabla</i> | 'Dabla': | 'Dabla is sad'. |
| | | | | |
| (15) | <i>mwsa-ya</i>
tiger-SBJ | <i>raga</i>
anger | <i>zwng-dwng</i>
feel- RLS | |
| | a. Agent | <i>mwsa-ya</i> | 'tiger-SBJ': | 'The tiger is angry'. (the speaker saw it) |
| | b. Agent | <i>mwsa</i> | 'tiger': | 'A tiger is angry'. |
| | | | | |
| (16) | <i>Gobla-ya</i>
Gobla-SBJ | <i>siyai-dwng</i>
yawn-RLS | | |
| | a. Agent | <i>Gobla-ya</i> | 'Gobla- SBJ': | 'Gobla is (definitely) yawning'. |
| | b. Agent | <i>Gobla</i> | 'Gobla': | 'Gobla is yawning'. |
| | | | | |
| (17) | <i>dudrunai</i>
rolling | <i>onthai-ya</i>
stone-SBJ | <i>bwrai-khwu</i>
old man-OBJ | <i>sithar-bai</i>
kill-PRF |
| | a. Agent | <i>onthai-ya</i> | 'stone-SBJ': | 'The rolling stone killed an old man'. |
| | b. Agent | <i>onthai</i> | 'stone': | 'A rolling stoned killed an old man'. |

Unlike in Meithei (Chelliah 2009:386), in which most agent-marked subjects occur with volitional activities or actions which are noteworthy (i.e. an activity which does not occur on a regular basis and attracts the attention of others), in Bodo, none of these are of any consequence for subject marking. The occurrence of the case marker *-a* with a subject of non-volitional activity in (16) or noteworthy activity in (17) has to do with the speaker's knowledge of the subject involved in the activity and not on volitionality or noteworthiness of the action as is the case in Meithei.

1.4.1. Pronouns

The split in pronouns is along the lines of person. First and second person are optionally case marked, while the third person is obligatorily case marked, irrespective of whether the verb is stative or dynamic. Pronouns marked by *-a* emphasize the involvement of the subject in the event expressed by the verb.

- | | | | |
|------|-------------------------|--|------------------------|
| (18) | <i>ang-w</i>
1SG-SBJ | <i>dukhu-za-dwng</i>
sad-happen-RLS | |
| | a. Agent <i>ang-w</i> | '1SG-SBJ': | 'I am definitely sad'. |
| | b. Agent <i>ang</i> | '1sg': | 'I am sad'. |

⁵ Chelliah (2009) shows that most agent marked subject occurs mostly with volitional activities or noteworthy activities.

- (19) *nwnng-w* *raga* *zwnng-dwnng*
 2SG-SBJ anger ignite-RLS
- a. Agent *nwnng-w* '2SG -SBJ': 'You are definitely angry'.
 b. Agent *nwnng* '2SG': 'You are sad'.
- (20) *bi-yw raga zwnng-dwnng*
 3SG-SBJ anger ignite-RLS
- a. Agent *bi-yw* '3SG-SBJ': 'S/he is angry'.
 b. *Agent *bi* '3SG': 'S/he is angry'.
- (21) *ang-w* *kharw*
 1SG-SBJ run
- a. Agent *ang-w* '1SG -SBJ': 'I definitely run'.
 b. Agent *ang* 'SG': 'I run'.
- (22) *nwnng-w* *khra*
 2SG-SBJ run
- a. Agent *nwnng-w* '2SG -SBJ': 'You definitely run'.
 b. Agent *nwnng* '2SG': 'You run'.
- (23) *bi-yw* *khara*
 3SG-SBJ run
 'He/she runs'.

1.5 Differential object marking⁶

Bodo exhibits object marking along the lines of animacy. Object marking is obligatory with human nouns and pronouns and optional with animate (non-human) and inanimate nouns. This is not unusual in the Northeast Indian context and has been explained at length by Morey (2013). In some of the languages of the region, animate (non-human) and inanimate object arguments are marked for definiteness and specificity. Bodo seems to pattern well with the definiteness scale proposed by Haspelmath (2008): Personal Pronoun > Proper name > Definite NP > Indefinite NP > Nonspecific NP.

1.5.1. Animate (human)

In Bodo, object marking may be obligatory or optional depending on whether the object is a proper or a common noun. Object marking is obligatory with pronouns and personal names as in (24) and optional with common nouns as in (25) below.

- (24) a. *ang* *nwnng-khwu* *nu-dwnng-mwn*
 ISG 2SG-OBJ see-RLS-PST
 'I saw you'.
- b. *ang* *bi-khwu* *nu-dwnng-mwn*
 ISG 3SG-OBJ see-RLS-PST
 'I saw him/her'.

⁶ An NP is specific if it is identifiable by the speaker but not by the hearer, while a definite NP is one that is identifiable by both the speaker and hearer. See Chelliah 2009:379-80 for detailed discussion.

- c. *ang nwngh-khwu mwjang-mwn-w*
 1SG 2SG-OBJ good-feel-AFF
 'I love you'.
- d. *ang Ram-khuu nu-dung-mun*
 1SG Ram-OBJ see-RLS-PST
 'I saw Ram'.
- e. *bi-yuu Rina-khuu lugumun-bai*
 3AG-SBJ Rina-OBJ meet-PRF
 'He/she has met Rina'.
- f. *Tomba-ya Tombi-khuu nai-dung-mun*
 Tomba-SBJ Tombi-OBJ see-ASP-PST
 'Tomba looked Tombi'.

Common nouns, on the other hand, are case marked only when a speaker wishes to refer to a particular object and not a general object.

- (25) *ang-w dakthar-khwu nager-dwng*
 1SG-SBJ doctor-OBJ search-RLS
- a. Object *dakthar-khwu* 'dakthar -OBJ': 'I am looking for a particular doctor'.
 b. Object *dakthar* 'dakthar': 'I am looking for a general doctor'.
- (26) *ang-w dao-khwu nudwng-mwn*
 1=SBJ bird-OBJ see-RLS-PST
- a. Object *dao-khwu* 'dao-OBJ': 'I saw a particular bird'.
 b. Object *dao* 'dao': 'I saw a general bird'.

1.5.2 Animate (non-human) and inanimate

Like common nouns, object marking with animate (non-human) and animate objects is optional. Animate objects marked by *-khwu* refer to a particular object and not a general object. On the other hand, patient marked by *-lo* indicate that a speaker places an entity in contrastive focus. This is discussed in section (1.5.3).

- (27) *Dabla-ya music-khwu mwzang mwn-w*
 Dabla-SBJ music-OBJ like feel-AFF
- a. Object *music-khwu* 'music-OBJ': 'Dabla likes a particular music'.
 b. Object *music* 'music': 'Dabla likes music'.
- (28) *bi-yw swima-khwu hw-dwng-mwn*
 3SG -SBJ dog-OBJ chase-RLS-PST
- a. Object *swima-khwu* 'dog-OBJ': 'He chased away a particular dog'.
 b. Object *swima* 'dog': 'He chased away a dog'.

- (29) *Ram-a dao-khwu buthar-dwng*
 Ram-SBJ bird-OBJ kill-PST

- a. Object *dao-khwu* 'bird-OBJ': 'Ram killed a particular bird'.
 b. Object *dao* 'bird': 'Ram killed a bird'.

1.5.3. Contrastive focus

Patients marked by *-lo* indicate that a speaker places an entity in contrastive focus. The speaker and hearer have knowledge of the entity; it is the opposition by the speaker of one entity against a set of possible entities that is framed as new information for the sake of the hearer.

- (30) *bi-yw swima-lo hw-dwng-mwn*
 3SG-SBJ dog-OBJ chase-RLS-PST
 'He chased away a dog'. (not any other animal)

- (31) *Ram-a wɣkham-lo za-bai*
 Ram-SBJ rice-OBJ eat-PRF
 'Ram ate food/rice'. (not other edibles)

- (32) *bi-yw satha-lo siphai-bai*
 3SG-SBJ umbrella-OBJ break-PRF
 'S/he broke an umbrella'. (not any other article)

1.5.4 Inanimate Object

Inanimate objects, unlike animate objects, are always case marked by either *-khwu* or *-nao*. The difference lies only in terms of the degree of the affectedness of the object. That is, *-khwu* marked objects are highly affected, while *-nao* (homophonous with the locative marker) marked objects are weakly affected.

Strongly affected object

- (33) a. *bol-a aina-khwu siphai-bai*
 ball-SBJ mirror-OBJ break-PRF
 'The ball broke the mirror'.
- b. *barhumhkha-ya abar-khwu garzri khalam-bai*
 storm-SBJ crop-OBJ bad make-PRF
 'The storm destroyed the crops'.
- c. *zibwu-wa enzor-khwu sithar-bai*
 snake-SBJ mouse-OBJ kill-PRF
 'The snake killed the mouse'.
- d. *biphang-a mansi-khwu swukhlai-dwng*
 tree-SBJ man-OBJ hit down-RLS
 'The tree hit the man (and the man died)'.
- e. *Dabla-ya ang-khwu raga zwng-dwng*
 Dabla-SBJ ISG-OBJ angry burn-RLS
 'Dabla annoyed me'.

Weakly affected object

Note that *-nao* occurs with animate (human and non-human) and *-ao* with inanimate object arguments.

- (34) a. *onthai-ya mansi-nao nang-dwng*
stone-SBJ man-OBJ hit-RLS
'The stone hits the man'. (no harm is caused)
- b. *bi-yw ang-nao hokdau-dwng*
3SG-SG 1SG-OBJ shout-RLS
'S/he scolded me'. (it did not hurt me)
- c. *onthai-ya wal-ao nang-dwng*
stone-OBJ wall-OBJ touch-RLS
'The stone hits at the wall'. (the wall is not affected)
- d. *onthai-ya gari-ao nang-dwng*
stone-SBJ vehicle-OBJ touch-RLS
'The stone hits the vehicle'. (the vehicle is not affected)

Unlike Table 1, which provides the obligatory and optional conditions for subject and object markers, Table 2 below provides the function of only the optional case subject and object case markers in Bodo.

Table 2: Functions of optional case marker

Subject	Function	Verb types	Case Marker
-animate	To make a general statement	dynamic	-a
	To place the subject under focus in order to get someone's attention	dynamic	absent
-animate	For specificity, referentiality, identifiability	stative	-a
	Not specific	stative	absent
Pronoun	-a marked pronoun emphasizes the involvement of person (1 st & 2 nd).		-a
Object			
Animate (-human) & -animate	Common nouns are marked for specificity and definiteness	dynamic	-khwu
	For contrastive focus	dynamic	-lo
-animate	Highly affected object	dynamic	-khwu
	Weakly affected object		-nao

2 Conclusion

Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages, Bodo has a system of differential subject and object case markers which may be obligatory or optional. In the case of subject marking, the case marker is obligatory with inanimate subjects of stative verbs and animate subjects of dynamic verbs, which is unusual for other Tibeto-Burman languages. Similarly, the case marker is obligatory with only proper and human nouns. In all other instances, the case marker is optional, irrespective of the animacy of the subject and the object or whether the verb is stative or dynamic. In the case of personal pronouns, the split is along the lines of person. That is, case marking is obligatory in the case of 3rd person pronoun and optional in the case of 1st and 2nd person. As in other Tibeto-Burman languages which exhibit optional case marking, the condition under which the subject and the object are marked depends on various semantic or pragmatic functions in Bodo. The crucial factors under which subjects are marked in Bodo depend on whether subject involvement is conceived as an event or state, and the speaker's knowledge of the subject involved in an event or state. Similarly, the crucial factors for object marking are the specificity of the object, the degree of affectedness of the object, and contrastive focus.

Abbreviations

aff	affirmative
abl	ablative
asp	aspect
com	comitative
decl	declarative
spec	specific
fut	future
gen	genitive
hab	habitual
inst	instrumental
loc	locative
neg	negative
np	noun phrase
nf	non final
pst	past
prf	perfect
rls	realis
sg	singular
sp	sentence particle
unp	unexpected

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Appendix: The story of Rawnani and Raswna

1. *gwdw gwdai dab-se gamiy-ao bida binanao zora-se*
long ago place-one village-LOC brother sister pair-one
dong-mwn-nw arw-ma
be-past-UNP mood
‘Once upon a time, there was one brother and sister’
2. *bi-swr sa-nwi-ya haba zanaini som za-bai*
3-PL CLS-two-SBJ marriage attain time be-PRF
‘They, attained a marriageable age’
3. *bobekhani bida-ya binanao-khou gswthwyw-mwn-nw bida-ya*
however brother-SBJ sister-PAT love-PST-UNP brother-SBJ
binanao-khwu haba khalam-nw laharphaha khalam-khwma-bai
sister-PAT marriage do-NF prepare do-secrete-PRF
‘However, the brother loved his sister and was secretly preparing to marry her’
4. *hathasuni-ni thakay sithla-yao mai lam-dwng*
marriage ceremony-for for courtyard-loc rice dry-rls
‘The paddy was dried in the courtyard for (their) marriage’
5. *Rawna-ni bibwi-ya dao hw-dwn-mwn hei hei*
Rawna-GEN G.mother-SBJ bird chase away-PST hello hello
‘Rawna’s G.mother chased away the bird saying ‘hello hello’’
6. *da-za dao da-za zwng-ni pisou Rawna arw*
NEG-eat bird NEG-eat our-GEN grandson Rawna and
‘Don’t eat, don’t eat, it is for their grandson and..’
7. *pisou-zw Rawni-ya haba za-gwn*
G.daughter Rawni-SUBJ marriage be-FUT
‘G. daughter’s marriage day’

8. *Rawni-ya be- khourang-khou bibwi- niphrai kwna-nanwi*
 Rawni=SBJ this news=PAT G. mother- ABL hear-after
gwmw-bai arw
surprise-pst and
 ‘Rawnani was surprised when she heard the news from her G. mother and’

9. *gazri bida-niphrai khar-go-nw thakai swrgw-ao bir-lang-yw*
 bad brother-ABL run-out-NF for heaven-LOC fly-far-HAB
 ‘She flew away to the sky in order to save herself from her wicked brother’

10. *binanao-khwou nu-hur-nanwi Rawna-ya bw khithu- khithu*
 younger sister=PAT see-far-away Rawna-SBJ also back back
binanao-khwu hws-ang-yw
 Y. sister-PAT chase-far-HAB
 ‘Seeing her sister flying away, Rawna followed her behind very closely’

11. *Rawni-ya khithu phwidla-nanwi Rawna-khwu*
 Rawni-SBJ back show-NF Rawna-pat
 ‘Rawni showed her back to Rawna (and said)’

12. *bima-ni phisay bung-nanwi bir=langyw zwmwi-ao*
 mother-GEN husband say-NF fly-away cloud-loc
 ‘be your mother’s husband and (she) disappeared away’

13. *Rawna=ya lazi-nanwi swgwm-khang-yw*
 Rawna-SBJ shy-feel roar-up-HAB
 ‘Rawna felt ashamed and (he) roared (in anger)’

14. *dinei subung pwra Bungw-je Rawni-ni khithu pwidlanaini thakai jeblaiwb*
 today people pl say-VF Rawni-LOC back showing for always
okha khrwmw arw
 rain lightning and
 ‘Today, people say that Rawni’s showing of her back always results in lightning and’

15. *bini hosrinai-ya jeblaiwb khrwmw*
 her shout always thunder
 ‘her shout always results in thunder’

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